

WASHINGTON, DC – If there is an institution that folks look to that needs change, it is Congress. As I travel around America's First District, so many of you share your frustrations that Congress often works at a snail's pace, and progress is not only at a standstill, but is often undetectable. I share those frustrations. Though I am one of 435 Members, I believe it's important that the collective voice from this district continues to resonate as one for common-sense solutions and results.

That's why I support numerous measures to reform the way Congress does business. Just last week, I opposed the proposal for the legislative branch budget, because I believe it did not do enough to trim budgets for Congressional operations. Congress has a duty to set a tone of fiscal responsibility and this bill simply did not cut enough. I also believe Members of Congress must set an example and cut their own salaries. I have continually supported legislation to cut the salary of Members, especially as individuals and families struggle to pay their bills or even find work. In January of 2011, I voted to reduce the amount authorized for salaries and expenses of Member, committee, and leadership offices in 2011 and 2012, and in my opinion there is still room to cut. I am also a cosponsor of the Congressional Pay Reform Act, to eliminate the automatic pay raise for Members of Congress. Although Congress has voted against this automatic pay raise in the last few years, I believe it should be permanently eliminated. Any future attempt to raise pay for Members of Congress should be considered in a fully transparent vote by the U.S. House of Representatives. This accountability and transparency is vital for Congress to responsibly serve the American people.

Congress also has a habit of procrastination on important deadlines, and I believe this must change. At the end of this year, many looming deadlines will affect every taxpayer in Virginia and across the country. I am extremely disappointed that Congress has not yet addressed these issues such as tax reform. The non-partisan Congressional Budget Office (CBO) issued a report last week outlining a bleak future if Congress does not act on fiscally responsible budget reform. The simple truth is that families and job creators cannot plan their budgets accurately without a concrete idea of what to expect in January. It is critical that action be taken to prevent disastrous tax increases on every American, as well as catastrophic cuts to our country's defense infrastructure, from taking effect. The discussion on how to avoid these disasters and truly enact meaningful change in Washington must take place now, not after the November election. The American people truly deserve a representative body that can produce reasonable solutions to promote economic growth, reduce spending, and restore faith in the fiscal management of our federal government. Fundamental tax reform is an intrinsic part of this, combined with reductions in wasteful government spending so that our economy can start to see growth and job creators can begin hiring again.

There is no question that Congress needs reform, both in terms of process and ideas. As the year progresses, I hope that you will continue to keep in touch with me – I would love to hear your thoughts on ways to reform Congress and government as a whole. Common-sense ideas to reform our government and restore economic vitality come not from Washington, but from main streets across America. I truly appreciate your input. As always, I can be reached via email on my website (www.wittman.house.gov), by phone (202-225-4261), on Twitter (<https://twitter.com/RobWittman>), or on Facebook (www.facebook.com/RepRobWittman).

Congressman Rob Wittman represents the First District of Virginia. He serves on the House Natural Resources Committee and the House Armed Services Committee where he is the Chairman of the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee.